

THE FLYING STAG PLAYS

NO. 3

THE ANGEL INTRUDES

FLOYD
DELL



EGMONT ARENS

NEW YORK

17074
THE FLYING STAG PLAYS
For The Little Theatre LBS

No. 3

THE ANGEL INTRUDES

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THE PUBLISHER.

The ANGEL INTRUDES
A Play in One Act by Floyd
Dell ▽ ▽ as played by the
Provincetown Players.

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TIME:

The present.

PLACE:

THE PROLOGUE:

Washington Square, New York City.

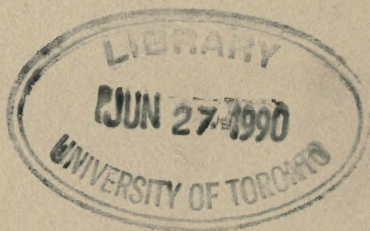
THE PLAY:

Jimmy Pendleton's Studio in Macdougall Alley.

THE ANGEL INTRUDES was first produced by the Provincetown Players, on December 28th, 1917, with the following cast:

A POLICEMAN	-	-	-	-	<i>Abram Gillette</i>
THE ANGEL	-	-	-	-	<i>James Light</i>
JIMMY PENDLETON	-	-	-	-	<i>Justus Sheffield</i>
ANNABELLE	-	-	-	-	<i>Edna St. Vincent Millay</i>

Scenes by Floyd Dell and Neal Reber. Directed by Nina Moise and Floyd Dell.



THE ANGEL INTRUDES

THE PROLOGUE:

Washington Square by moonlight. A stream of Greenwich Villagers hurrying across to the Brevoort before the doors are locked. In their wake a sleepy policeman.

The Policeman stops suddenly on seeing an Angel with shining garments and great white wings, who has just appeared out of nowhere.

THE POLICEMAN

Hey, you!

THE ANGEL

[Haughtily, turning.]

Sir! Are you addressing me?

THE POLICEMAN

[Severely.]

Yes, an' I've a good mind to lock you up.

THE ANGEL

[Surprised and indignant.]

How very inhospitable! Is that the way you treat strangers?

THE POLICEMAN

Don't you know it's agen the law of New York to parade the streets in a masquerade costume?

THE ANGEL

No. I didn't know. You see, I just arrived this minute from Heaven.

THE POLICEMAN

Ye look it.

THE ANGEL INTRUDES

THE POLICEMAN

[Taking his arm kindly.]

See here, me lad, you've been drinkin' too many of them stingers. Ye'd better take a taxi and go home.

THE ANGEL

What! So soon?

THE POLICEMAN

I know how ye feel. I've been that way me-self. But I can't leave ye go trapesin' about in skirts.

THE ANGEL

[Drawing away.]

Sir, I am not trapesing about. I am attending to important business, and I must ask you not to detain me.

THE POLICEMAN

[Suspiciously.]

Not so fast, me laddie-buck. What business have you at this hour of the night? Tell me that.

THE ANGEL

I don't mind telling you. It concerns a mortal called James Pendleton.

THE POLICEMAN

[Genial, again.]

Aha! So you're a friend of Jimmy Pendleton's, are you?

THE ANGEL

Not exactly. I am his Guardian Angel.

THE POLICEMAN

Well, faith, he needs one! Come, me boy, I'll see ye safe to his door.

THE ANGEL

Thank you. But, if you don't mind, I prefer to go alone.

[He turns away.]

THE POLICEMAN

Goodnight to you, then.

[He idly watches the angelic figure walk away, and then stares with amazement as it spreads its wings and soars to the top of Washington Arch. Pausing there a moment, it soars again in the air, and is seen wafting its way over the neighboring housetops to the northeast. The Policeman shakes his head in disapproval.]

THE PLAY:

Jimmy Pendleton is dozing in an easy chair before the grate-fire in his studio in Washington Mews. A yellow-backed French novel has fallen from his knee to the floor. It is Anatole France's "La Revolte des Anges." A clock strikes somewhere. Jimmy Pendleton awakes.

JIMMY

What a queer dream!

[He looks at his watch.]

One o'clock. The taxi ought to be here.

[He takes two tickets from his pocket, looks at them, and puts them back. Then he commences to pace nervously up and down the room, muttering to himself.]

Fool! Idiot! Imbecile!

[He is, not so that you could notice it, any of these things; he is a very handsome man of forty. There is the blast of an auto horn outside. He makes an angry gesture.]

Too late! That's the taxi.

[But he stands uncertainly in the middle of the floor. There is a hard pounding of the knocker.]

Yes, yes!

[He makes a movement toward the door, where it suddenly opens, and a lovely lady enters. He stares at her in surprise.]

JIMMY

Annabelle!

[Annabelle is little. Annabelle's petulant upturned lips are rosebud red. Annabelle's round eyes are baby-blue. Annabelle is— young.]

ANNABELLE

Yes! It's me!

[There is a tiny lisp in Annabelle's speech.]
I got tired of waiting, and the door was unlocked, so I came right in.

JIMMY

Well!!

ANNABELLE

[Hurt.]

Aren't you glad to see me?

JIMMY

I'm—delighted. But—but—I thought we were to meet at the station.

ANNABELLE

So we were.

JIMMY

You haven't changed your mind?

ANNABELLE

No...

JIMMY

Er—good.

ANNABELLE

But...

JIMMY

Yes...?

ANNABELLE

I got to wondering...

[Drifts to the easy chair in front of the fire.]

JIMMY

Wondering...about what?

[He looks at his watch.]

ANNABELLE

About love...

JIMMY

Well...

[He lights a cigarette.]

It's a subject that can stand a good deal of wondering about. I've wondered about it myself.

ANNABELLE

That's just it—you speak so cynically about it. I don't believe you're in love with me at all!

JIMMY

Nonsense! Of course I'm in love with you.

ANNABELLE

[Sadly.]

No, you're not.

JIMMY

[Angrily.]

But, I tell you, I *am*!

ANNABELLE

No...

JIMMY

Foolish child!

ANNABELLE

Well, let's not quarrel about it now.

JIMMY

[Vehemently.]

What do you suppose this insanity is if it isn't love? What do you imagine leads me to this preposterous elopement, if not that preposterous passion? What makes you come with me in spite of the way I talk? Tell me that!

ANNABELLE

Perhaps I'm not coming.

JIMMY

Yes you are. It's foolish—mad—wicked—but you're coming.

[She begins to cry softly.]

If not—ten minutes away is safety and peace and comfort. Shall I call a taxi for you?

[She shakes her head.]

No. I thought not. Oh, it's love all right.

ANNABELLE

I hate you!

JIMMY

[Cheerfully.]

That's all right.

[Smiling.]

I rather hate you myself. And that's the final proof that this is love.

ANNABELLE

[Sobbing.]

I thought love was something quite—different!

JIMMY

You thought it was beautiful. It isn't. It's just blithering, blathering folly. We'll both regret it tomorrow.

ANNABELLE

I won't!

JIMMY

Yes you will. It's human nature. Face the facts.

ANNABELLE

[Tearfully.]

Facing the facts is one thing and being in love is another.

JIMMY

Quite so. Well, how long do you think your love for me will last?

ANNABELLE

For ever!

JIMMY

H-m! I predict that you will fall in love with the next man you meet.

ANNABELLE

I think you're perfectly horrid.

JIMMY

So do I. I disapprove of myself violently. I'm a doddering lunatic, incapable of thinking of anything but you. I can't work. I can't eat. I can't sleep. I'm no use to the world. I'm not a man, I'm a mess. I'm about to do something silly because I *can't* do anything else.

ANNABELLE

[Pouting.]

You've no respect for me.

JIMMY

None whatever. I love you. And I'm going to carry you off.

ANNABELLE

You're a brute.

JIMMY

Absolutely. I'd advise you to go straight home.

ANNABELLE

[Defiantly.]

Perhaps I shall!

JIMMY

Then go quick.

[He takes out his watch.]

In one minute, if you are still here, I shall pick you up and carry you off to South America. Quick! There's the door!

ANNABELLE

[Faintly.]

I—I want to go...

JIMMY

Well, why don't you? . . . Thirty seconds!

ANNABELLE

I—I can't!

JIMMY

[Shutting his watch.]

Time's up. The die is cast!

*[He lifts her from the chair. She clings to him helplessly.]*My darling! My treasure! My beloved!
Idiot that I am!*[He kisses her fiercely.]*

ANNABELLE

[Struggling in his arms.]

No! No! No! Stop!

JIMMY

Never!

ANNABELLE

Stop! Please! Please! Oh! . . .

[The light suddenly goes out, and an instant later blazes up again, revealing the Angel, who has suddenly arrived in the middle of the room. The two of them stare at the apparition.]

THE ANGEL

I hope I am not intruding?

JIMMY

Why—why—not exactly!

THE ANGEL

If I am . . .

JIMMY

No, really . . .

ANNABELLE

[*In his arms, indignantly.*]

Jimmy! Who is that man?

JIMMY

[*Becoming aware of her and putting her
down carefully.*]

I—why—why, the fact is, I don't . . .

THE ANGEL

The fact is, madame, I am his Guardian Angel.

ANNABELLE

An Angel! Oh!

THE ANGEL

Tell me, *have I* intruded?

ANNABELLE

No, not at all!

THE ANGEL

Thank you for reassuring me. I feared for a moment that I had made an inopportune entrance. I was about to suggest that I withdraw until you had finished the—er—ceremony—which I seem to have interrupted.

JIMMY

[*Surprised.*]

But wasn't that what you came for—to interrupt?

THE ANGEL

I beg your pardon!

JIMMY

[*Bewilderedly.*]

I mean—if you *are* my Guardian Angel, and all that sort of thing, you *must* have come to—to interfere!

THE ANGEL

I hope you will not think I would be capable of such presumption.

JIMMY

[*Puzzled.*]

You don't want to—so to speak—reform me?

THE ANGEL

Not at all. Why, I scarcely know you!

JIMMY

But you're my—my Guardian Angel, you say?

THE ANGEL

Ah, yes, to be sure. But the relation of angelic guardianship has for some hundreds of years been a purely nominal one. We have come to feel that it is best to allow mortals to attend to their own affairs.

JIMMY

[*Abruptly.*]

Then, what *did* you come for?

THE ANGEL

For a change. One becomes tired of familiar scenes. And I thought that perhaps my relationship to you might serve in lieu of an introduction. I wanted to be among friends.

JIMMY

Oh, I see.

ANNABELLE

Of course. We're delighted to have you with us. Won't you sit down?

[*She leads the way to the fire.*]

THE ANGEL

[Perching on the arms of one of the big chairs.]

If you don't mind! My wings, you know.

JIMMY

[Hesitantly.]

Have a cigarette?

THE ANGEL

Thank you.

[He takes one.]

I am most anxious to learn the more important of your earthly arts and sciences. Please correct me if I go wrong. This is my first attempt, remember.

[He blows out a puff of smoke.]

ANNABELLE

[From the settle.]

You're doing it very nicely.

THE ANGEL

It is incense to the mind.

ANNABELLE

[Laughingly, blowing a series of smoke rings.]

You must learn to do it like this!

THE ANGEL

[In awe.]

That is too wonderful an art. I fear I can never learn it!

ANNABELLE

I will teach you.

THE ANGEL

[Earnestly.]

If you were my teacher, I think I could learn anything.

ANNABELLE

[Giggles, charmingly.]

JIMMY

[*Embarrassed.*]
Really, Annabelle...

ANNABELLE

What's the matter?

JIMMY

Ordinarily I wouldn't mind you're flirting with strangers, but...

ANNABELLE

[*Indignantly.*]
Jimmy! How can you?

THE ANGEL

It was my fault, I'm sure—if fault there was.
But what is it—to flirt? You see, I wish to learn everything.

ANNABELLE

I hope you never learn that.

THE ANGEL

I put myself in your hands.

JIMMY

Er—would you like a—drink?

THE ANGEL

Thank you. I am very thirsty.

[*Taking the glass.*]
This is very different from what we have in Heaven.

[*He tastes it. A look of gratified surprise appears on his face.*]
And *much* better!

[*He drains the glass and hands it back.*]
May I have some more?

ANNABELLE

Be careful!

THE ANGEL

What should I be careful of?

ANNABELLE

Don't take too much of that—if it's the first time.

THE ANGEL

Why not? It is an excellent drink.

JIMMY

[*Laughing.*]

The maternal instinct! She is afraid you may make yourself—ridiculous.

THE ANGEL

Angels do not care for appearances.

[*He stands up magnificently in the chair, towering above them.*]

Besides...

[*Refilling his glass.*]

I feel that you do an injustice to this drink. Already it has made a new being of me.

[*He looks at Annabelle.*]

I feel an emotion that I have never known before. If I were in Heaven, I should sing.

ANNABELLE

Oh! Won't you sing?

THE ANGEL

The fact is, I know nothing but hymns. And I'm tired of them. That was one reason why I left Heaven. And this robe...

[*He stands up, viewing his garment with disapproval.*]

Have you an extra suit of clothes you could lend me?

JIMMY

[*Reflectively.*]

Yes. I think I have some things that might fit.

[The Angel waits.]

Do you want them now? I'll look.

[He goes into the bedroom. The Angel looks at Annabelle, until his gaze becomes insupportable and she covers her eyes. Then he comes over to her side.]

THE ANGEL

[Gravely.]

I am very much afraid of you.

[He takes her hands in his.]

ANNABELLE

[Smiling.]

One would never guess it!

THE ANGEL

I am more afraid of you than I was of God. But even though I fear you, I must come close to you, and touch you. The strange, new emotion is like fire in my veins. This world has become beautiful to me because you are in it. I want to stay here so that I may be with you...

ANNABELLE

[Shaken, but doubting.]

For how long?

THE ANGEL

Forever...

ANNABELLE

[In his arms, surrendering to the word.]

Darling!

THE ANGEL

I am so ignorant! There is something I want to do right now, only I do not know how to go about it properly.

[He bends shyly toward her lips.]

ANNABELLE

I will teach you.

[She kisses him.]

THE ANGEL

Heaven was nothing to this.

[They kiss again. Enter Jimmy, with an old suit of clothes over his arm. He pauses in dumbfounderment. At last he regains his voice.]

JIMMY

Well!

[They look up. Neither of them is perturbed.]

THE ANGEL

[Blandly.]

Has something happened to annoy you?

[Jimmy shakes the clothes at him in an outraged gesture.]

Oh, my new costume. Thank you so much!

[He takes them gratefully.]

JIMMY

[Bitterly, to Annabelle.]

I suppose I've no right to complain. You can make love to anybody you like. In fact, now that I come to think of it, I predicted this very thing. I said you'd fall in love with the next man you met. So it's off with the old love, and...

ANNABELLE

[Calmly.]

I have never been in love before.

JIMMY

The fickleness of women is notorious. It is exceeded only by their mendacity. But Angels have up to this time stood in good repute. Your conduct, sir, is scandalous. I am amazed at you.

THE ANGEL

It may be scandalous, but it should not amaze you. It has happened too often before. I could quote you many texts from learned theological works. "And the sons of God looked at the daughters of men and saw that they were fair." But even if it were as unusual as you imagine, that would not deter me.

JIMMY

You are an unscrupulous wretch. If these are the manners of Heaven, I am glad it is so far away, and means of communication so difficult. A few more of you would corrupt the morals of five continents. You are utterly depraved—Here! What are you doing?

THE ANGEL

I am taking off my robes, so as to put on my new clothes.

JIMMY

Spare the common decencies at least. Go in the other room.

THE ANGEL

Certainly, if that is the custom here.

[With the clothes over his arm, he goes into the bedroom.]

JIMMY

[Sternly.]

And now tell me, what do you mean by this?

ANNABELLE

[Simply.]

We are in love.

JIMMY

Do you mean to say you would throw me over for that fellow?

ANNABELLE

Why not?

JIMMY

What good is he? All he can do is sing hymns. In three months he'll be a tramp.

ANNABELLE

I don't care. And he won't be a tramp. I'll look after him.

JIMMY

[*Sneeringly.*]

The maternal instinct! Well, take care of him if you like. But of course you know that in six weeks he'll fall in love with somebody else?

ANNABELLE

No he won't. I'm sure that I am the only girl in the world to him.

JIMMY

Of *course* you're the only girl in the world to him—now. You're the only one he's ever seen. But wait till he sees the others! Six weeks? On second thought I make it three days. Immortal love!

[*He laughs.*]

ANNABELLE

What difference does it make? You don't understand. Whether it lasts a day or a year, while it lasts it will be immortal.

[*The Angel enters, dressed in Jimmy's old clothes, and carrying his wings in his hands. He seems exhilarated.*]

THE ANGEL

How do I look?

JIMMY

It is customary to wear one's tie tucked inside the vest.

THE ANGEL

[Flinging the ends of the gorgeous necktie over his shoulder.]

No! Though I have become a man, I do not without some regret put on the dull garb of mortality. I would not have my form lose all its original brightness. Even so it is the excess of glory obscured.

ANNABELLE

[Coming over to him.]

You are quite right, darling.

[She tucks it inside his vest.]

THE ANGEL

Thank you, beloved. And now these wings! Take them, and burn them with your own sweet hands, so that I can never leave you, even if I would.

ANNABELLE

No! I would rather put them away for you in a closet, so that you can go and look at them any time you want to, and see that you have the means of freedom ready to your hand. I shall never hold you against your will. I do not want to burn your wings. I really don't! But if you insist. . . !

[She takes the wings and approaches the grate.]

JIMMY

[To the Angel.]

Don't let her do it! Fool! You don't know what you are doing. Listen to me! You think that she is wonderful—superior—divine. It is only natural. There are moments when I have thought so myself. But I know why I thought so, and you have yet to learn.

Keep your wings, my friend, against the day of your awakening—the day when the glamour of sex has vanished, and you see in her, as you will see, an inferior being, with a weak body, a stunted mind, devoid of creative power, almost devoid of imagination, utterly lacking in critical capacity—a being who does not know how to work, nor how to talk, nor even how to play!

[Annabelle, putting down the wings beside the grate, stares at him in speechless anger.]

THE ANGEL

Sir! Do you refer in those vulgar and insulting terms to the companion of my soul, the desire of my heart, the perfect lover whose lips have kindled my dull sense to ecstasy?

JIMMY

I do. Remember that I know her better than you do, young man. Take my advice and leave her alone. Even now it is not too late! Save yourself from this folly while there is time!

THE ANGEL

Never!

JIMMY

Then take these tickets and I hope I never see either of you again!

[He holds out the tickets. Annabelle, after a pause, steps forward and takes them.]

ANNABELLE

That is really sweet of you, Jimmy!

[The blast of an auto horn is heard outside.]

JIMMY

[Bitterly.]

And there's my taxi. Take that, too.

THE ANGEL

Farewell!

[He opens the door. Annabelle, at his side, turns and blows Jimmy a kiss. Stonily Jimmy watches them go out. Then he picks up his suitcase and goes, with an air of complete finality, into the other room. There is a moment's silence, and then the door opens softly, and the Angel looks in, enters surreptitiously, seizes up the wings, and with them safely clasped to his bosom, vanishes again through the door.]

CURTAIN.

